

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for formulating context representations for use in information services based on an active task being manipulated by a user, comprising the steps of:
determining properties related to the active task;
generating a context representation based on an analysis of the active task;
retrieving at least one transformation rule corresponding to the properties related to the active task; and
transforming the context representation by applying the at least one transformation rule corresponding to the properties related to the active task.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the properties include attributes related to the user.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the properties include attributes related to attributes of application software used in performing the active task.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein the attributes of application software used to perform the active task include at least one of the identity of the application software and the type of the application software.

5. The method of claim 3, wherein the application software is an e-mail application.
6. The method of claim 5, wherein the at least one transformation rule corresponding to the properties related to the active task includes eliminating text included in a signature section.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein the properties are related to the subject matter of the active task or the genre or type of the active task.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein the properties related to the active task is determined based on an indication provided by the user.
9. The method of claim 8, wherein the user indicates the subject matter of the active task by clicking a button included in a graphic user interface.
10. The method of claim 1 further transforming the context representation based on a user input related to a trait of search.
11. The method of claim 1 further determining an information source on which an information search should be conducted based on the properties of the active task.

12. The method of claim 11 further comprising the steps of:
retrieving information related to properties of the information source; and
further transforming the context representation based on the properties of the
information source.

13. A machine-readable medium bearing instructions for formulating context
representation for use in information services based on an active task being
manipulated by a user, the instructions upon execution by a data processing system
causing the data processing system to perform the steps of:
determining properties related to the active task;
generating a context representation based on an analysis of the active task;
retrieving at least one transformation rule corresponding to the properties related
to the active task; and
transforming the context representation by applying the at least one
transformation rule corresponding to the properties related to the active task.

14. The medium of claim 13, wherein the properties include attributes related
to the user.

15. The medium of claim 13, wherein the properties include attributes related
to attributes of application software used in performing the active task.

16. The medium of claim 15, wherein the attributes of application software used to perform the active task include at least one of the identity of the application software and the type of the application software.

17. The medium of claim 16, wherein the application software is an e-mail application.

18. The medium of claim 17, wherein the at least one transformation rule corresponding to the properties related to the active task includes eliminating text included in a signature section.

19. The medium of claim 13, wherein the properties related to the active task is determined based on an indication provided by the user.

20. The medium of claim 13, wherein the user indicates the subject matter of the active task by clicking a button included in a graphic user interface.

21. The medium of claim 13 further transforming the context representation based on a user input related to a trait of search.

22. The medium of claim 13 further comprising instructions, upon execution by the data processing system, control the data processing system to determine an

information source on which an information search should be conducted based on the properties of the active task.

23. The method of claim 22 further comprising instructions, upon execution by the data processing system, control the data processing system to perform the steps of:
retrieving information related to properties of the information source; and
further transforming the context representation based on the properties of the information source.

24. A method for formulating context representations of an active task comprising the steps of:
generating at least one constituent of the context representation;
accessing information related to attributes of a user; and
modifying the at least one constituent of the context representation based on the attributes of the user.

25. The method of claim 24 further conducting an information search based on a result of the modifying step.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein information search is conducted in information sources selected based on the attributes of the user.

27. The method of claim 24, wherein the attributes of the user include at least one of the user's occupation, the user's position or role in an organization, and the user's major.

28. A machine-readable medium bearing instructions for formulating a context representation of an active task, the instructions upon execution by a data processing system causing the data processing system to perform the steps of:

generating at least one constituent of the context representation;

accessing information related to attributes of a user; and

modifying the at least one of the constituent of the context representation based on the attributes of the user.

29. The machine-readable medium 28 further including instructions, upon execution by the data processing system, causing the data processing system to conduct an information search based on a result of the modifying step.

30. The machine-readable medium 28, wherein information search is conducted in information sources selected based on the attributes of the user.

31. The method of claim 28, wherein the attributes of the user include at least one of the user's occupation, the user's position in an organization, and the user's major.

32. The method of claim 1, wherein

the determining step is performed by executing a first software program by a data processing system;

the generating step, the retrieving step and the transforming are performed by executing a second software program by the data processing system; and

the first software program and the second software program reside on different machines.